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ABSTRACT

Testimony was presented by representatives of the St. Croix Valley Association of Teacher Educators (SVCATE) and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA). SCVATE recommendations are presented on the topics of teacher recruitment, preservice teacher education, inservice teacher education, and teacher retention. MASA testimony, delivered by John R. McClellan, involved suggested changes that would improve teacher preparation programs, including: (1) improving school district inservice education programs; (2) developing ways of attracting high quality teacher candidates; (3) devoting more time to the elements of instruction and their application in teacher training programs; (4) post-testing students at the completion of a given program; (5) modeling effective teaching methodologies; and (6) emphasizing and modeling higher level thinking skills and problem solving. (CB)

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

SUBMITTED BY THE ST. CROIX VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS (SCVATE) ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1984

HISTORY OF THE ST. CROIX VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

The St. Croix Valley Association of Teacher Educators (SCVATE) is one of a group of organizations concerned with the improvement of teacher education. It is a local unit of the Wisconsin Association of Teacher Educators. (WATE) and the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), a national group founded in 1920. All ATE units include school based and campus based educators. They speak for those individuals and institutions who are concerned with teaching and teacher education.

The St. Croix Valley ATE was founded in 1965 as an advisory council to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. It provides a sounding board whereby educational problems can be aired openly and honestly within a framework of concern for the profession of education. Members belong to an Educators Council and serve on a variety of ad hoc committees based upon their interests. A Public Interest Forum, whose members are appointed by the Dean of the College of Education, meets periodically. In 1977 SCVATE was granted approval from ATE and WATE to become a local unit, one of only a few in the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment: In order to attract the highest quality personnel to pursue careers in education SCVATE recommends efforts to revitalize Future Teachers of America chapters in high schools. Entrance requirements for teacher education programs must be upgraded with an emphasis on higher grade point standards and competency testing. Salaries must be comparable to other professions and occupations.

Pre-Service: The professionalization and enhancement of the academic reputation of teacher education programs must be given significant attention. Early and sustained field experiences supervised by classroom teacher educators should be designed to meld theory with practice. A cadre of classroom teacher educators should exist for each teacher education program. These teachers would have special training and demonstrated supervision competencies. Colleges and Universities should grant special status for them, such as adjunct faculty standing.

In-Service: SCVATE recommends improved induction programs with the classroom teacher educator playing a significant role in the induction of those entering the profession. Initial certification should be probationary and only in areas of clearly demonstrated subject matter and pedagogical skill competence. Continued recertification should be through a program of five year license renewal based upon Continuing Education Units; and performance and subject matter competency. SCVATE has strong reservations concerning alternative certification programs which allow

certification without education coursework. The answer we believe is improved programs in pedagogy and not their elimination. There should also be increased fiscal commitments to meaningful in-service programs.

Retention: To enhance the respect, status, and opportunities for professional growth and development SCVATE advocates the adoption of differentiated staffing models utilizing the career ladder concept. Financial rewards should be sufficient to retain quality individuals. School districts should give full credit for years of teaching experience. Years of experience should not be reduced - with resulting reduced salary levels - for teachers who move from one district to another.

Teachers must share fully in decision-making from the building level to the Presidential Cabinet level. Respect and status for the profession will not occur when teachers do not help shape and develop the programs, policies, and regulations which impact on their profession.

We believe SCVATE is a model for teacher involvement. We advocate the creation of similar advisory groups for all teacher education programs. We also favor a fiscal model which would create a professional development fund in which payments by teacher education institutions would go into a line item in the district's budget for in-service and to help finance professional activities of classroom educators.

We also recommend that federal aid be increased to help establish Future Teacher Chapters and we urge the continued existence of the Cabinet level Department of Education.

"RESEARCH AND TEACHER EDUCATION"

AS

VIEWED BY

THE

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PRESENTED

BY

JOHN R. MCCLELLAN

SEPTEMBER 25, 1984

Thank you for selecting Minnesota as the site for one of your regional hearings.

My name is John R. McClellan. I am the Superintendent of the Centennial School District, located on the north side of the Twin Cities. I have served as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, elementary principal, assistant superintendent and for the past 9 years as a Superintendent.

I am here today as President of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators. Our organization has over 600 members, all of whom are either superintendents or district level administrators. I am proud to live in a state where education is, and I believe, will continue to be a high priority!!

In an attempt to utilize my few minutes productively, I selected only a few key topics for comment as they relate specifically to teacher preparation programs. It's interesting that you are here today looking for ways of improving the teacher training programs because only last week our State Supreme Court heard two cases relating to the rights of parents to educate their children at home.

It would appear that some parents believe the only two criteria necessary to teach children are:

1. Having children and

2. Buying a "curriculum" that is loaded with fundamental, humanistic and Christian principles.

I certainly hope that our Supreme Court takes a broader and more global interest in the overall welfare of the children involved in being educated at home.

I will attempt to sort out personal biases and thoughts from MASA positions or policies. Some over generalizations regarding teacher preparation programs as viewed by practicing administrators in this State include:

1. The enthusiasm of the new teachers hired during the past few years has not been surpassed by any previous groups.

2. Our most recently hired teachers seem to be very sensitive and caring people.

3. The communication skills, particularly in the area of writing, are lacking.

4. There is a perceived lack of training among the new teachers in the area of knowing what is effective

teaching. More important the technique of being able to model effective teaching is not occurring as often as desired. There is also a need for better classroom management skills.

5. The administrators in this State are curious to know how college professors actually gain their insights into the methods of successful teaching. None of the administrators to whom I have spoken have ever had a methods course professor visit their school district.

6. There seems to be a concern among school administrators that practice teaching for 10-12 weeks coupled with several one hour college professor visitations is not assuring anyone of quality.

7. There is a missing link in the communication between teacher preparation programs and public schools. There is almost a void in the area of communicating or articulating common program concerns.

What changes would improve teacher preparation programs?

These comments are general in nature and many of these changes may already be in place in some colleges and universities. It should also be pointed out that it will not be possible to legislate all of the following changes.

1. The educational profession needs to take a very careful look at its own behavior. Much of the bad publicity and negative outlook of the profession can be traced back to, what I consider, less than professional behavior by our membership.

2. School districts need to devote more time to meaningful in-service activities, particularly in the areas of effective teaching, technology and affective behavior.

3. The profession doesn't need greater numbers of people entering it, we need higher quality applicants. Ways of attracting top quality people need to be developed. Some of the possibilities include:

   -Tuition grants, scholarships, interest free loans, etc.

   -The most significant way may be to have our current teachers talking positively about their profession and sharing their joy with the students.

4. It is perceived that teacher training programs need to have students devote more time to the elements of instruction and practical application of those elements under the care and guidance of high quality teachers.

5. There does not seem to be a correlation between effective teaching and college teaching. In fact, it is our perception that an inverse correlation may exist. It appears that the most effective teaching may be occurring at the primary grade level and starts to decline until it reaches its lowest point at the post-graduate level.

6. Although many people favor college entrance testing, our organization would suggest that post-testing students at the completion of a given program for a quality check would be more beneficial.

7. Teacher training programs need to emphasize and, more importantly, model effective teaching methodologies.

8. There is a need for more depth in subject areas with a melding together of the various method courses. Demonstrated mastery as a requirement is essential.

9. There is a perceived need to emphasize and model higher level thinking skills and problem solving.

10. There is a need for change in laws that dictate which teachers stay, which teachers leave and which courses will be taught, based on longevity of staff.

Some Other Related Thoughts:

The following suggestions relate to a variety of teacher improvement topics:

1. In this State, there is an over abundance of specialized teaching licenses available and indeed required in all school districts, particularly as they relate to special education. I would suggest there is a danger that as a person learns more and more about less and less he/she will know very little about anything.

   This over specialization, particularly in the special education area, is not only a questionable practice, it often severely limits and handicaps the hiring and staffing of programs in most school districts. Again, the question of quality is an issue.

2. Our organization does not oppose merit pay. In fact, I believe the vast majority of our members support the concept.

On a personal note, I would like to see merit pay in some form very soon. It seems we have spent a disproportionate amount of time trying to prevent a recognition and incentive program for our employees rather than trying to develop one.

When merit pay does arrive, I believe it should be rooted in learner outcomes, reward good teaching and recognition of staff members who make contributions in the community. We must encourage personal growth and include all school employees. Again, the emphasis needs to be on rewarding and recognizing quality.

3. Just a few words about life licensure. Our State is currently phasing out life licenses and they are no longer being issued. The current system of getting a new license requires 120 renewal units every 5 years. This system guarantees continuing education but does nothing to assure quality.

MASA does support curriculum enrichment, in-service education for staff and professional development. We are very serious about the need of instructional effectiveness training. MASA recognizes the vital importance of a competent teaching staff and wishes to contribute in any way possible to furthering this concept.

In closing, I want to again thank the committee for visiting our State. I have attached to this testimony, copies of the MASA Educational Policies regarding these topics.

If there are any questions, I would be happy to respond to them.

EDUCATIONAL/INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

9. Goals And Objectives In Education

The State Board of Education is encouraged to continue its effort toward the definition and updating of goals and objectives for the general and uniform system of Minnesota public education. Consultation and input from MASA and others should be a part of the updating process. A current statement is needed in order to provide criteria for assessment by the public, its elected representatives and agents. Further, a current statement is needed as a guide for determining the adequacy and allocation of resources to accomplish the state purposes.

MASA endorses the development of a goals and objectives system on the local district level for the purpose of improving educational programs and serving the needs of children. Once established, such systems should be given high priority.

MASA believes resources should be available to continue the work initiated on the state level and to support the development and implementation of a goals and objective systems on the local district level. The main emphasis of these goals and objectives should be the educational welfare of the student. Further, MASA urges its membership to exercise strong leadership in continuing to develop such systems.

10. The Improvement of Instruction: Complete Involvement

The emerging concept of public education places demands upon school systems beyond their traditional role. The Legislature an State Board of Education, as well as local school boards, citizens, and faculties, must share the responsibility of establishing priorities. In order to accomplish this task, all services and needs of the educational community must be under constant review in light of present practices and alternatives available for instruction, learning and resource utilization.

The superintendent of schools is the key figure in organizing staff and community for meeting these challenges. Close cooperation and development of the administrative team is an absolute requirement.

MASA believes that parent, student, teacher, administrator and school board member must be involved in the identification and planning for these many challenges on each level.

MASA also believes that the entire staff must be accountable for the instructional procedures and programs of the schools.

11. Instructional Program

A comprehensive educational program should be available to all residents. MASA believes in securing optimum educational opportunities for all persons throughout Minnesota. Educational delivery systems should be designed in such a way as to allow a variety of paths leading to completion of requirements for graduation from high school.

MASA supports the Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting (PER) legislation in establishing district-wide education goals and instructional objectives.

A continuous improvement of the quality of education for Minnesota public schools remains an MASA goal. Competencies in the basic skill areas, as well as all other areas of educational endeavor, are certainly included as part of the overall goal. MASA believe that minimum competency testing is a local district prerogative, and that determination regarding the use, or lack of use, of minimum competency testing is best made at that level.

12. Inservice

With the impact of change due to application of technology within education and staff assignments due to reduction in force, there is a mandated need for continuing educational development for professional school personnel.

The assurance of quality in continuing education is an important concern of MASA. MASA accepts the challenge to offer opportunities to engage and participate in meaningful and worthwhile inservice. MASA supports the need, in an accelerated change pace, for the development of comprehensively designed systems for personal and professional development of all educational personnel.

13. Equality of Access to Educational Programs

It is a goal of MASA that each student has the right to equality of access to educational programs. Each student should have reasonable access to comparable programs and services within the limits of available resources. General, special and vocational opportunities should comprise elements of an acceptable standard program to be considered by local school boards in providing appropriate equality of access. Such educational access may be provided either individually or collectively under a variety of organizational and technical mechanisms according to the needs of each student.

14. Early Childhood Education

MASA believe that there are many benefits to be gained by all children from early childhood education. MASA supports legislation which would provide sufficient funding for such programs, provided that the K-12 program is adequately funded, and provided that a significant emphasis is on educating parents rather than on only providing direct services to students.

15. Exceptional Children

MASA supports the education of exceptional children, defined as including the gifted child, in a manner that is appropriate to each child's needs. The appropriate system safeguards should be used in the identification and placement process to assure that all exceptional children have equal access and availability to appropriate services. To achieve this goal, sufficient additional federal and state financial resources must be made available to local school districts to avoid adversely affecting other essential programs.

16. Student Needs

MASA urges its membership to work cooperatively with other child advocacy groups to develop and implement strategies of instruction and guidance designed to help children prevent, resolve, or cope with societal conditions, such as:

Teen-age pregnancies

Venereal disease

Violence

Addiction to alcohol, drugs, narcotics and tobacco

Teen-age suicide and other mental disorders

Varied family structures

Parental absence from the home

Excessive television viewing

Unhealthy nutritional intake

Child abuse

Unemployment